

Commentary — From the Margins *An Infallible Text* [Part Nine]

9.

Returning to Paul's tour-de-force analogy of outwardly circumcised Israel being of Hagar (of being spiritually comparable to Ishmael) while Christians are the true *promised son*, we find,

But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written,

"Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear;
break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor!

For the children of the desolate one will be more
than those of the one who has a husband." [quoted from Isa 54:1
Septuagint translation]

Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the spirit, so also it is now. But what does the Scripture say?

"Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." [quoted from Gen 21:10]

So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman. (Gal 4:26–31)

Earthly Jerusalem is not heavenly Jerusalem, nor is earthly Isaac spiritual *Isaac*—and the concept of <persecuted> is a stretch; for Ishmael, then a young adult approximately nineteen years old would have “played with” or at worst “mocked” Isaac, then about five years old, the age for weaning before baby bottles, infant formula, or canned milk could be purchased from grocery stores. And as an aside, I was in Sabbath services at Kenai, Alaska, when, a row behind me and in a voice loud enough to be heard by even the pastor, the young son of a family that had just returned from living in the Bush said, *Other tit, Ma*. She was nursing her son under a blanket—and he was weaned that day, such was his mother's embarrassment.

It isn't, however, Paul's analogy that here interests me: it is Paul's citation from Genesis 21; for the citation is part of a problematic passage that wasn't corrected in imperial redactions of the 9th through 7th Centuries BCE, when the linguistic determinative <YHWH> became a personal name ... the problem is more evident in the Septuagint, translated from a *vorlage* differing from the one used to produce the Masoretic Text (MT), than it is in modern English translations, but the problem remains in all texts:

So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my

servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me!" But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her. The angel of [YHWH] found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." The angel of [YHWH] said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." The angel of [YHWH] also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." And the angel of [YHWH] said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because [YHWH] has listened to your affliction. He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen." So she called the name of [YHWH] who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing," for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me." Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered. And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. (Gen 16:3–16)

The preceding is pretty straightforward: Hagar is pregnant with Ishmael. She has not yet given birth. And her pregnancy has caused problems between Sarai and Hagar, with Sarai regretting that she had given Hagar to her husband and with Hagar disrespecting Sarai, who apparently becomes abusive to Hagar.

Theologically (that is, in a *Hebrew styled* narrative), Isaac must be born in a dead womb, analogous to a tomb, a grotto where the dead dwell. Again, Isaac is not *Isaac*, but the left hand enantiomer of disciples who are the children of “the free woman” (Gal 4:31). And disciples are spiritually born through receiving a second breath of life, the breath of God [*pneuma Theou*] in the breath of Christ [*pneuma Christou*]. They are not born via human endeavor or the will of a human person. They are spiritually dead before birth. Thus, the infertility that had plagued Abraham and Sarah’s marriage had to—yes, had to—be shown to be a defect of Sarah, not of Abraham, about whom Paul wrote, “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:29).

In his epistle to Galatians, the Apostle Paul equates Christ with Abraham; thus, Abraham’s journey of faith from Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran, then down to Canaan and on down into Egypt before returning to Canaan forms a shadow and copy of Jesus’ journey of faith from life [heaven, analogous to the Promised Land] into death [Haran or Assyria, where *the old man* remains] then to Canaan [life] and on to Egypt [the earthly representation of sin] where He could not remain even though He took upon Himself the sins of Israel, and finally back to Canaan [life], with Abraham’s second journey of faith to the land of Moriah representing the glorified Christ in His interaction with *Isaac*.

The preceding is not exactly how Paul's use of Abraham's faith has been traditionally received by endtime Christians, who, whenever possible, avoid thinking in allegories, preferring instead to read the Bible literally.

In Abraham being the left hand enantiomer of Christ Jesus, Ur of the Chaldeans [Babylon] represents heaven, which is not how Sabbatarian Christians have come to think of Babylon or its spiritual king, the Adversary. For the man Jesus being born as the unique Son of the Logos [*'o Logos*] who was God [*Theos*] and who was with [*pros*] the God [*ton Theon*] in primacy [*arche*] (John 1:1; 3:16) came from heaven where its king over the single kingdom of this world is not today God, Father and Son, but remains the Adversary. Hence, Nebuchadnezzar as the human king of earthly Babylon would aptly serve as a "servant" of the Lord (see Jer 25:9); for Nebuchadnezzar is/was the left hand enantiomer of the Adversary, that old dragon, Satan the devil, the present king of spiritual Babylon. And when all authority in heaven and on earth is given to Christ Jesus—it has not yet been given to the glorified Jesus despite how Matthew 28:18 is usually read by Christians (traditional Christian readings of Matthew's Gospel are not allegorical)—dominion over the single kingdom of this world will be taken from the Adversary, the current king of Babylon, and given to the Son of Man, Head and Body (*cf.* Dan 7:9–14, 26–27; Rev 11:15–18).

The Adversary serves today as a servant of the Most High God. The Adversary has no power, no authority, no dominion except what has been given him by God. Thus, the Adversary works for God, doing those things that God permits as seen in how the Adversary interacted with the man Job, bringing upon Job sore trials because Job's obedience—his perfection—originated in his fear of the Lord rather than out of love for the Lord. Job's problem wasn't self-righteousness as is usually claimed by Christian pastors and theologians using Job chapter 31 (especially verse 37) as their proof text, but was a much deeper, much more serious problem: Job's problem was his motivation for his perfection. Job's problem was not that he knew he had done no wrong. The testimony of the Lord held that Job was perfect in all of his ways. So for Job to have false humility (at least as great a problem as is self-righteousness), acknowledging unbelief/sin he didn't have would have been a lie. Job could say nothing. To acknowledge fault would have been a lie, and since Job believed that evil only befell the unrighteous, he was between that proverbial rock and a hard place. He, too, knew he was perfect in all of his ways: Job believed the Lord and had always acted on his belief so no fault, no shortcoming was found in all that he did. The blame for what was happening to him, therefore, had to reside in the Lord acting as a faithless man acts.

Satan served the Lord when he attacked Job, going against Job as far as the Lord would permit. If Satan had been as perceptive as a man, he would have prospered Job to such an extent that Job, in his prosperity, became so busy managing the things of this world that he neglected the Lord, believing all the while that it was the Lord who was blessing him. Thus, in the Job account endtime disciples see the predictability of the Adversary, who as the spiritual king of Babylon serves the Most High God. We also see that the reason for us to do the things that we do, such as keeping the Commandments, cannot be from fear of the Lord but must necessarily be out of love for Him.

How does a person “love” a deity the person doesn’t know ... for all that Job knew about righteousness, he did not *know the Lord*. Therefore, after the Lord rebuked Job, the man answered:

I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. *Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?* Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. *Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.* I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes. (Job 42:2–6)

For Christians today, prior to when the single kingdom of this world is given to the Son of Man, the spiritual king of Babylon (the Adversary) represents heaven. Even though Christians within the greater Church direct their prayers to the Father or to the Son, it is to the Adversary to whom these Christians actually pray. And the Adversary, an intelligent former guardian angel, has learned to think as a man thinks, not realizing that he will be given the mind of a man when he is cast from heaven as Nebuchadnezzar was given the mind of an ox for seven years; so the Adversary now prospers those who are his to such an extent that they cannot escape from Babylon. They cannot make a journey of faith analogous to the journey Abraham made. They truly cannot unless a ransom price is paid for them; for humanity, collectively, is the slave of the Adversary, serving ungodliness and unrighteousness even when spouting as pious sounding words as Job’s three friends spouted.

But I digress, wandering far from Sarai’s barren womb ... life must be added to Sarai’s womb before it can bring forth life; hence as aspiration representing a second breath is inserted in the middle of Abram’s name, aspiration representing a second breath is added at the end of Sarai’s name. Thus, in Abram being renamed Abraham when he receives the covenant ratified by circumcision of the flesh, Abram/Abraham forms the left hand enantiomer of Christ Jesus as spiritual Abraham receiving a second breath of life in the bodily form of a dove. This second breath of life enters into the man Jesus at the beginning of His earthly ministry, thereby giving to Jesus a circumcised heart. And in where aspiration is inserted in Abram’s name discloses where the man Jesus receives that second breath of life (i.e., inside Him, behind His head, about where a whale’s blowhole would be). Likewise, where aspiration is added to Sarai’s name discloses where disciples receive a second breath of life, with perhaps the English translation of the Septuagint offering some clarity: in moving from the Semitic consonant cluster of the *vorlage* used by Septuagint translators, Sarai’s name is rendered as <Sara>. When aspiration is added to her name, Septuagint translators transcribe the name as <Sarra> rather than *Sarah*, thereby transforming the received aspiration into a growl—

The Semitic letter <R> was probably inspired by an Egyptian hieroglyph for “tp,” the glyph appearing as a human head. The connection between the letter and the glyph was reinforced by the Semitic word for “head”: <RÊŠ>, the name of the letter.

The letter “R” became known as the *littera canina* (the canine letter) because the Latin “R” was trilled to sound like a growling dog, with an example being the Spanish word for dog, *perro*. English playwrights William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson both

acknowledged the connection between the letter and growling. And apparently so did the translators of the Septuagint; hence Paul spoke of Ishmael persecuting Isaac and Sarah growling about that persecution.

Abraham was Sarah's head: the Septuagint's <Abraam> for *Abraham* and <Sarrah> for *Sarah* better discloses the headship relationship than does English translations of the MT. Thus, the aspiration added to Abram's name that forms the shadow and copy of Jesus, the last Abraham, receiving a second breath of life—this aspiration makes Christ Jesus the *head* of every disciple truly born of spirit as the addition of an "R" to Sara's name rather than another vowel reinforces the image of Abram being Sara's head despite deferring to her in the matter of Hagar.

And it is in the matter of Hagar where disclosure that Abram and Sarai's infertility problem wasn't because of Abram's impotence, again a theologically important point for Sarai/Sarah's womb is analogous to the tomb that metaphorically represented the body of the whale in the Jonah narrative ... God through Christ Jesus is perfectly capable of bringing many sons to life. Abram was capable of bringing a son or sons to life, what Hagar and Keturah reveal. So to make Abraham and Jesus enantiomorphs in a *Hebrew-styled* narrative that spans millennia, a scene needed to exist to show that Sarai's womb was dead, something that she acknowledges,

[YHWH] said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" [YHWH] said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for [YHWH]? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son." But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh." (Gen 18:10–15)

Sarai's womb was dead throughout her life because of who or what she represented in the *Hebrew-style* narrative that will have the physical forming the shadow and type of the spiritual, without the veracity of the physical being at issue.

The previous clause—*without the veracity of the physical being at issue*—discloses the potentially most damning aspect of Scripture: the Genesis story need not be true for the spiritual [the right hand enantiomer of those things contained in Genesis] to be true. If the things transcribed are true (my argument is that they are), then those things can be used as prophecy to disclose future events. If they are not as many academics hold, their lack of factual basis in no way diminishes the non-physical reality that they reveal to disciples who have the mind of Christ. The very fact that they are inscribed transports them from physically imaginary to spiritual reality; for the act of Abram entering Hagar and fathering a son by her does not happen in the 21st-Century but comes to all endtime disciples in the form of a "real" narrative that may or may not be literally factual. The narrative exists as an artifice with its own life apart from the life of the patriarch. So for a scholar to doubt the Abram/Hagar story merely discloses the "professional" limitations placed on the scholar. He or she should doubt the creation account of Adam and Eve, the marking of Cain narrative, the biblical flood narrative, the Babel narrative,

even Sarah's dead womb narrative. In each case, the physicality of the phenomenon cannot be replicated; for each phenomenon functions to reveal a non-physical spiritual reality that will manifest itself in this world as red wine in an overfilled wine glass spills out as an irregular stain on a white linen tablecloth. To understand what has happened isn't to look at the stain—isn't to look at war in the Middle East—but to look at the left hand enantiomer of a spiritual reality.

Therefore, the extended Genesis narrative can be treated as “true” regardless of whether the narrative is factual: the narrative “is” in a similar way to how a poem *is*. The narrative exists; therefore the focus of the narrative isn't those things that the narrative purports to mimetically describe (*e.g.*, an ark of gopher wood), but the narrative itself. In a similar manner, a Christian isn't the fleshly body of a person professing that Jesus is Lord, but rather, a Christian is the inner self [*psuche* or *soul*] that has been raised from death through the indwelling of the spirit of God [*pneuma Theou*] in the spirit of Christ [*pneuma Christou*].

An inscribed narrative is fossilized utterance; is frozen breath; is physically and spiritually lifeless. Nevertheless, the inscribed narrative exists as a *thing* in this world, a created thing, with the same sort of life-in-death as a human person possesses. And as a human person is inherently neither true nor false but “is,” an inscribed narrative is neither true nor false regardless of how the narrative has been either labeled by others or self-labeled as in a self-aware text declaring itself *true*.

Biblical scholars practicing historical criticism place severe limits on their ability to understand texts written in *Hebrew style*. In fact, their self-imposed limitations actually prevent understanding spiritual things for they are unable to produce readable hypertexts and maintain professional credibility. At best they can only read many-times-over redacted texts, look for seams disclosing these redactions, and strive to discern what the apographs of long lost autographs were.

But only one half of a text written in *Hebrew style* needs to be true, the spiritual half—the right hand enantiomer half. The other half only needs to exist to form the shadow and type of the spiritual half. And for the Abraham/Isaac analogy, Sarah's womb needs to be dead even before old age stole her potential fertility. In addition, disciples in the 1st-Century were represented by the son-of-promise, Isaac. In the 21st-Century, the context for Christendom has changed. The signifiers no longer have the same meaning they had in the 1st-Century, and endtime Christians will be represented by Esau, who was hated before birth, and by Jacob, the deceitful son of promise.

What Paul wrote about disciples in Galatia being *Isaac* was true in the 1st-Century. And as the context for the sign changes from the 1st-Century to the 21st-Century, the sign [that is, *Isaac*] produces two sons of promise—“And Isaac prayed to [*YHWH*] for his wife, because she was barren. And [*YHWH*] granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived” (Gen 25:21)—so endtime disciples will not be represented by the patriarch Isaac, but by his sons, Esau and Jacob, with Esau representing lawless Christendom (hated before spiritual birth) and with Jacob having to wrestle with God before prevailing over death.

What I wanted to address in this section of an extended Commentary is, however, the second installment of the Hagar story:

[YHWH] visited Sarah as he had said, and [YHWH] did to Sarah as he had promised. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him [Ishmael would have been fourteen]. And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me." And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." And the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing. *So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac."* And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring." So ***Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away.*** And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. ***When the water in the skin was gone, she put the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot, for she said, "Let me not look on the death of the child."*** And as she sat opposite him, she ***lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation."*** Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. ***And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. And God was with the boy, and he grew up.*** He lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt. (Gen 21:1–21 emphasis and double emphasis added)

The boy was already grown: Ishmael would have been eighteen, nineteen years old when Isaac was weaned. He would have been far too large for Abraham to put the boy on Hagar's shoulder.

The story of Hagar when pregnant fleeing from Sarai in Genesis chapter 16 and the story of Hagar being driven out when Isaac is weaned (Genesis chapter 21) are two differing stories that cannot be reconciled. One or both stories have a non-canonical

origin. They cannot both be true; for no one places a nineteen year old on his mother's shoulder, nor does the mother of a nineteen year leave her son under a bush to die.

Paul cites verse 10 of the seemingly false Hagar narrative that subtracts seventeen or more years from Ishmael's age when Isaac was weaned ...

Exactly how the Hagar narrative found in Genesis chapter 21 escaped redaction will never be known; for someone should have reconciled the two accounts, modifying the one to work with the other, and thereby never allowing endtime disciples to know how much tinkering with canonical texts actually occurred in the production of the infallible word of God. I jest, but not really. Textual seams show. One occurs whenever a genealogy is given. But this is not a bad thing, nor should these seams produce disbelief of the sort that would cause Sabbatarian Christians to rush out of services to gorge themselves on crab and lobster as actually occurred in the early 1990s when spiritual wolves devoured most of the flock of Sabbatarian disciples Herbert Armstrong had gathered to himself.

In the canonization of the New Testament, debate between fellowships and bishops prevented early adoption of both 2nd Peter and Revelation; for these two texts are mutually incompatible. Fellowships holding that Revelation was a valid vision rejected 2nd Peter; for Peter wrote,

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to His promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Pet 3:1-13)

No, the day of the Lord will NOT come as a thief in the night. In this Peter (and probably the Apostle Peter writing with his own hand, the reason for the roughness of the Greek) was wrong: Peter simply didn't know that there would be a millennial reign of Christ Jesus, a thousand year long reign that forms the right hand enantiomer of the Adversary's long reign over the mental topography of living creatures, a reign that will end halfway through the seven endtime years of tribulation, a reign that will end on the doubled day 1260 when Satan and his angels are cast to earth.

Can Peter be held accountable for what he didn't know? No, he cannot be. What Peter wrote was true as far as Peter understood the things of God. Peter did not intentionally falsify anything. Nevertheless, Peter is not fully compatible with John's vision, nor with Matthew's Gospel, written in Hebrew style.

And it here where I want to temporarily quit this section: Hagar fleeing when pregnant from Sarai is believable. Hagar being expelled from Abraham's household when Ishmael is nineteen is believable; for Ishmael would then be old enough to provide for his mother and a wife. But the remainder of the Hagar story in Genesis chapter 21 seems to be from another time, an earlier time, before the growl was added to Sarai's name.

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